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WHAT THE UNITED STATES HAS ACHIEVED IN

WAR ACTIVITIES AND MORAL LEADERSHIP

BY

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Friends, Colleagues and Students:

We are gathered here this afternoon, not so much to review what we have done or failed to do in the Great War during the past year, as to dedicate ourselves anew to the great enterprise that we have undertaken.

In spite of all that has been said during the year in which we have been at war with the Central Powers of Europe, sustaining and helping our hard-pressed and courageous Allies, it does not seem to me that the average American citizen even yet realizes what a fundamental world issue is involved; how great is our privilege in being permitted to enter this conflict actively and on the right side; how important a turning point in the history of the world the outcome of this war may be; and how fortunate we are in having a president, who has seized the opportunity to convert what to a narrow observer seemed a mere struggle for additional territory and additional material resources into a great issue in the progress of human freedom.

When Louis XVI called together the Estates General in the year 1789 to take counsel as to the state of the kingdom, a struggle arose between the king and the representatives of the various orders, which might easily have remained a mere local incident in the life of a single nation. But the genius of the French people converted it into a great crusade for liberty, equality, and fraternity, out of which grew that mighty convulsion, called simply "The Revolution," so fundamental in its characteristics and results, so sweeping in its wide-spread influence, that all previous human history seemed a mere preparation for it and all subsequent history a mere outcome of it; all previous lines of development seeming to converge toward it and all subsequent lines of progress to spring out of it.

The present war at first was regarded by some as a mere contest on the part of great nations for more territory and a larger population and greater wealth. It was natural to judge from previous human experiences that smaller powers standing in the way

*Abstract of an address by the President of the University at the general convocation held April 8, 1918, in honor of the first anniversary of the entrance of America into the Great War, April 6, 1917.

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of the waves of this furious struggle for national supremacy would be swept away, devastated, ruined, utterly effaced perhaps,—and that all this would happen as so inevitably a result of the conflict of great powers that while much sympathy might be felt or even expressed, the only active result would be a shrugging of the shoulders and an "alas! alas! Such is life. Such is the fate of the small man! and the small nation!"

And then the conduct of the Central Powers became such that even those Americans who did not appreciate or care for a moral role among the nations for the Great Republics, saw themselves constrained to force action in order to defend our national independence, nay, our national existence.

Even then the issue might have been narrowed and might have been formulated as a selfish one, affecting ourselves alone or the particular desires of national units, such as the securing to Italy of the territory it desired at the expense of Austria, or the giving to Russia of the right to determine the eastern boundaries of Germany, while to France and England should be given a similar privilege as to the western boundaries, and the assignment to England of the German Colonies—a kind of dispute in which the American people could have little personal interest except so far as it safeguarded or threatened our power or security.

With one noble and sweeping gesture President Wilson wiped out all these items on the slate of world division and organization and wrote down as our goal the safeguarding of human liberty throughout the earth: to all people—not merely to ourselves—to the small as well as to the great—to the weak as to the strong—the assurance that they may order their own lives as freemen.

This is a program to which we may all subscribe, for which we Americans may all toil and suffer and sacrifice and if need be, die, because we believe that human liberty is the foundation stone of all human progress.

Now the great thing which President Wilson has done is to make this program of his the program of the United States, the program of the Allies,—nay, the program of the world; for even the Central Powers have been compelled to adopt the same slogan —even the Kaiser is emphasizing that he has gone into Russia not for his own sake but to free its people. We have not been misled,

of course, by this statement, for we know the kind of freedom that the lion brings to the lamb,—a freedom, it is true, from responsibility, a freedom from independence, from self-determination, a freedom from freedom with all its toil and trouble and sacrifice,—but at the same time a freedom from all the joys and ecstacies of self-development and progress which freedom permits.

Never before in human history have so many nations lined up consciously for the great end of establishing the right of all to live, and also their bounden duty to let live, and for this end we have to thank the President of the United States, Woodrow Wilson. Let us stand by him until this end is achieved!

There is another side from which our participation in this war may bring to us satisfaction and hope. The advantage of victory in this great war, friends, will not redound merely to the Pole, the Bohemian, the Slovak, the Serb, but also, and in no less degree, to the subjects of other governments, fighting not on the side of the Central Powers but on the side of the Allies,—on our side.

We Americans can not in good conscience and with self-respect line up for freedom and fair treatment for the Pole and Serbian without forming a new and more potent resolution that the negro, the Porto Rican, the Filipino shall have no reasonable cause of complaint under our government. We can not insist that the German Government shall secure political rights to the common man without resolving anew that the ordinary civil rights shall be secured to all our citizens alike, no matter what their color or race or previous condition of servitude; without determining that mobs and lynching parties shall have an end throughout the broad territory subject to the jurisdiction of the Republic.

I do not mean to say that all these things are going to happen immediately upon the conclusion of peace, but I do maintain that they are all involved in a complete and sweeping victory by the Allies over the Central Powers.

A chapter out of our own history, which we ought never to forget, will help us to understand what will be possible if we only keep our eyes on the stars.

On the fourth of July, 1776, a representative body of American colonists announced to the world a thesis for the defense of which they pledged their lives and fortunes and sacred honor. This thesis

was that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by the Creator with certain inalienable rights, among which are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

None of these men found it particularly inconsistent with the above thesis to hold human slaves in a peculiarly debasing form of bondage known as African slavery. Such a practice was, of course, not consistent with the profession given above, and when this profession was once made, so great is the power of the winged word that the practice had to cease in time or the profession had to be renounced. That profession was not, alas! the statement of a fact in existence at that time, but a prophecy of something to come; and one of those peculiar prophecies,—thank God,—the mere formulation of which helps to their realization.

It behooves us Americans, who have entered this great contest for human liberty, to remember how easily such a conflict may degenerate and how necessary it is to hold it on a high plane, worthy of our aspiration and our sacrifice. We ought not to forget that the price of liberty is still eternal vigilance, watching not merely over our enemies, but over ourselves, our desires, our ambitions, our conduct.

In spite of that magnificent announcement in the Declaration of Independence, which sounded a new note in the history of the world, leading directly to the French Revolution and all its consequences, it was nearly ninety years before we in this country were willing to draw the logical conclusion and to take the decisive step in our own policy so imperatively called for by the sentiments and language of this declaration. Eighty-five years after the Declaration of Independence was given to the world, calling forth sentiments and aspirations that seemed to have died out in the world's breast, a considerable proportion of the intelligent, liberty-loving, warm-hearted American citizens pledged their lives and fortunes and sacred honor to a war in defense of this same institution of African slavery. And it was not until they were thoroughly defeated, until a million precious lives had been sacrificed, uncounted billions of money had been destroyed, that they finally acquiesced in an outcome of the Civil War, which was nothing but the logical development of the Declaration which their ancestors had adopted, and to which they had pledged their support and enthusiasm for near-

ly a century. With the close of the American Civil War, the Declaration of Independence began to have a new meaning for us, although it is far from being realized fully yet.

This war and our relation to it will put a new and larger meaning into this great Declaration of which every American should be proud and which every American should be determined to help realize to the fullest possible extent. We shall come to understand more fully than we do now that the rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness are not mere negative rights but positive rights calling not merely for inaction, but for positive policies on the part of society that they may be fully realized. Thus the time shall be hastened when no man who is able and willing to labor shall suffer for lack of work; when to every one willing to do his share the means for living a decent human life shall be secured; when economic and industrial liberty, shall be recognized as essential elements in that civil liberty chiefly contemplated in the Declaration.

Toward all this a decisive and early victory over Germany and her allies will be greatly conducive.

We ask you all to enlist in this war and for the duration of this war in the trenches, in the factories, in the shipyards, on land and on the sea, in your own homes—wherever you are and whatever else you may be doing—all the time helping to create that atmosphere which will insure success.

I have been asked to say one word, and my time limits do not permit more, about what our country has already accomplished during this first year of the war toward the winning of it.

First of all I wish to say in a very positive way that I think our achievements in this direction have been truly remarkable and are fully comparable with the best done by other nations working under anything like similar conditions, and I think our Government deserves the respect and confidence of the American people.

Of course we have made mistakes—many of them and shall doubtless make many more—costly, bitter mistakes, owing partly to that cockiness which is so characteristic of all us Americans; partly owing to our ignorance; partly to our inefficiency in making war to which this generation is practically strange, for our Spanish war was not a war at all; partly to our love of individuality which makes co-operation difficult; partly to our ingrained partiality for competition instead of combination, etc., etc.

In spite of all this, we have adopted a system for recruiting our armies far superior to anything we ever had before. It has been inaugurated without difficulty and with little trouble, and with the full consent as well as the enthusiastic support of the American people. It is the most democratic plan we have ever employed and with a few changes will rank with the best schemes ever adopted for this purpose, viz: recruiting the armies of a free State and providing for their maintenance in man power and equipment.

We have called a large number of men to the standards and are training them for the various branches of military and naval service under, on the whole, very satisfactory conditions, though there have been some egregious mistakes , calculated to make us blush for American inefficiency. Instances of gross inability, however, to handle difficult situations are becoming less numerous as our organization is improved.

Again, we have raised a different kind of army from any army hitherto produced in the history of mankind,—an army of which we shall be increasingly proud as the months go on and from the training of which our country will derive an advantage long after the war is over.

We have begun to build and launch ships and from all present indications we shall soon be turning out an increasing tonnage. We were not a nation of shipbuilders and it takes time to train men and get material. We are manufacturing munitions and guns faster than we can get them to the front, and there is no reason to suppose that we shall break down at any time in this work.

Our aircraft program has from various causes failed to meet our reasonable expectations. The full causes have not yet been made public but it looks now as if the whole movement were going into a new era and we shall speed up in this department also.

We have been successful in our war finance. All our enterprises have turned out well. Our taxes have yielded all that was expected of them. Our loans have been over-subscribed, and the Red Cross, Y. M. C.A., and Knights of Columbus campaigns, fruitful beyond our expectations.

We have been able to meet all our bills and lend in addition large sums to our Allies to help them in their straits.

Above all and finally and most important of all, we have begun to send troops to the firing line.

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We have already done very subs to meet the submarine danger and thus help keep the ocean safe for the transport of troops and supplies.

We have sent, nobody outside the War Department knows really how many, troops to France and England, but my guess is over one-half million. No information has as yet been given out as to how many troops are actually on the firing line.

But one great fact stands out in which we may take profound comfort in spite of regret that we have not done more, viz: that before the close of the first year after the declaration of war, a considerable number of American soldiers were actually engaged by the side of our English and French comrades in defending the battle line of freedom on the bloodstained fields of France. Coming to their aid from every part of this country are long lines of railway trains filled to their limits with American boys—great steamers are sending them by the tens of thousands to the training camps in France. Guns, amunition, supplies of all sorts make almost continuous moving lines from the great forests of Washington, Oregon, and the mines of California, Nevada, Arizona, and the wheatfields and stockranges of the whole North American Continent— ever on! ever on to the trenches of France and Belgium!

What does it all mean? What can it mean except victory for our Allies? The Germans may take Amiens; they may take Paris; they may take Calais; but the more they take the more they will ultimately have to disgorge. The further they drive forward, the longer the way back. The greater their temporary victory, the more crushing their final defeat.

The stars in their courses are fighting for us and our cause, and if only we are true to the high ideals we have adopted, and show ourselves worthy of our ancestry—in energy, in perseverance, in skill, and in devotion—the victory, an overwhelming victory will be ours.

A victory for us means victory for the forces of righteousness and of progress; protection for the small nation and the small man, for women and children. It means LIBERTY and FREEDOM for all!

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